

The American Girl



Anne Mayan

WEST VIRGINIA
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

West Virginia University Libraries



3 0802 101834592 7

**This book must not be taken
from the Library building**



PHOTOGRAPH
BY HUGGINS

Bessie Clayton

THE AMERICAN GIRL

HER EDUCATION
HER RESPONSIBILITY
HER RECREATION
HER FUTURE

BY
ANNE MORGAN



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXV

HEALTH
SCIENCE

Locked
Cage
HQ
1229
M67
915

The essays which make up this volume were
first published in the *Woman's Home Companion*.

COPYRIGHT, 1914, 1915, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY, 1915

A-P

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. HER EDUCATION	1
II. HER RESPONSIBILITIES	16
III. HER RECREATION	32
IV. THE GIRL AND HER FUTURE	49

THE AMERICAN GIRL

THE AMERICAN GIRL

I

HER EDUCATION

HOW can the girl of America be prepared and prepare herself for all that life will bring to her? How can her secret garden best be planted and watered, so that its soil may bring forth an ever-growing beauty of blossom and fulfilment, and its shady walks and running brooks bring rest and inspiration to the weary traveler along the road of life? For this preparation, after all, is the real meaning and purpose of education; and it is in an endeavor to trace out

THE AMERICAN GIRL

the reasons why the education of our girls has proved in the main unsatisfactory that this study of conditions and results has been written.

It is sometimes possible to make accurate deductions concerning a whole class from a few isolated specimens. It has interested me exceedingly to observe the American girl who lives abroad, insignificant numerically though she is, and to note that notwithstanding her marvelous adaptability to her surroundings she is still the American Girl, unlike any other girl in the world.

No intelligent person can fail to remark how the qualities, both desirable and unfortunate, which make her unique, are, after all, American qualities. The patriotic American woman who visits Europe for sufficiently long periods to enable her to establish herself in society sees with clear eyes, sometimes with a kind of affectionate impatience, her young countrywomen who have taken root in the older civilizations, and who are the

HER EDUCATION

targets alike of admiration and of bitter criticisms.

For generations, now, current literature has been filled with descriptions of the American girl. We find her in English novels as a wild, undisciplined creature, with a desire for every luxury and a corresponding objection to any personal restraint. Germany and France present her to the world as an unsexed primitive force with an appendage of dollars which should unquestionably be used to reinstate financially some old and historic name.

Back of the statements of fiction, however, lie certain indisputable facts. The American girl and her individual influence in Europe can no longer be questioned, in view of the fact that there is hardly a capital where she does not appear either as the present holder of a name with wide responsibilities or as the mother of a son who in himself must combine the hereditary traditions of the Eastern with the hot pulses and quick action of the Western civilization. Still more note-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

worthy to us is the fact that this Europeanized American often loses most of the superficial distinctions of her country; in true chameleon fashion she has taken on the exact color of her environment. Without study or analysis she has proceeded with a deadly facility for producing effects, and has soon assumed what is often the worst characteristic of her surroundings.

This internationalism of the American girl is far in excess of that of any other nationality. Intermarriages always have existed, and always will exist, but never, since the days of the barbarian invasions, has any one country supplied so many instances.

Just what the advantages or disadvantages of this immigration are to Europe each country must decide. It is more important for us to determine the results to America of this emigration. Is our country losing of her best to the older countries, already full of the beauty and tradition of a bygone age? Or is that

HER EDUCATION

ever-active "Melting Pot," American Civilization, simply trying to clarify itself by throwing off its useless scum? Is it sending off to Europe its pleasure-loving and self-seeking representatives that have been fed and nurtured in a group where Privilege has reigned supreme?

Those same daughters are in many cases the children of great men, men who were filled with the splendid spirit of the pioneer—men of great vision and infinite capacity. Are their daughters so little true to type that they fail to see the higher and deeper ideal of their own age? That which their fathers created must be made good by them. It is only by meeting the responsibilities of her own period and position that the American girl who marries abroad can prepare herself to hand down to her children the responsibilities of a great name and a great race. We often, therefore, find her failing in her new position, not from lack of adaptability to her environment, but because she is not ready to face the serious side

THE AMERICAN GIRL

of her husband's life and duty. She has looked to Europe for greater freedom than she could find at home: instead she has found heavy responsibilities enforced by generations of tradition.

America is a country where, to its own undoing, individualism has reigned supreme. The time has come when the forces of group conscience and group consciousness are drawn up in hostile array against the doctrine of individual egotism. The American girl who seeks to avoid the inevitable conflict by looking to European sanctuary is indeed deceived. She longs for the finish and beauty of the old order, and, in looking far afield to what past generations have accomplished, she fails to realize that it lies in her own hands to bring that same beauty into her own surroundings. A finer idealism and a greater courage will cause her to face the conflict at home.

To study and analyze the American girl and her environment is the problem; to see what she so readily may become

HER EDUCATION

if she is able to see with a clear vision and act with a conviction based on the Faith that is beyond sight.

The first period of our girls' existence is a period of preparation. The most extreme of our modern educators feel that it is not the education which is given that is of any value in the development of an individual, but that which is created and developed from within. So far is this principle carried by some advanced teachers that no student must be urged to follow any line of established fact or principle. She must be completely isolated from the conclusions of previous generations and taught only to follow the expressions of her own mood and interests. Her own and her teacher's mind must be constantly turned toward the development of her own individuality as a matter of vital importance. The child's imagination is chiefly fed by the recurrent thought of self-study and self-development; everything comes to her in a subjective form. Discipline is unknown be-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

cause, in modern eyes, discipline is the blind acceptance of what is rather than what might be.

There can be but one result of this hot-house development. The miserable little victim, taught only to follow her own whims, comes face to face with life as it really is, and finds herself utterly unable to cope with its problems and difficulties. The essentials of all character-building must be developed in early life along lines far different from these. Discipline and order must be the foundations of any creative individualism. Science and philosophy must be explained in proportion to the constantly growing intellect; but the acceptance of certain fundamental truths must be taught the child in its earliest youth. The parent who says, "No, my child must be given complete freedom; I cannot bring her up in any definite faith which might hinder or hamper her future choice," is robbing her child of her greatest birthright.

Freedom of choice is indeed one of the

HER EDUCATION

greatest gifts possessed by mankind, but it must come to a well-trained and spiritually developed character, not to an ignorant and unformed child. Would we apply the same cure of ignorance to any other form of thought? Would we say, "No, I will not teach my child arithmetic or history, for he must choose later whether he will be a mathematician or a statesman"? What kind of love is it that robs a child of those habits of thought that are formed only in early years?

Whatever life may bring to the grown girl of doubt and uncertainty, or of a deep religious conviction, the girl who faces her problems with high-souled courage and profound thought is generally the girl who can look back to a childhood where order and discipline were accepted and understood, because of a great faith and a great love that lay behind and beyond all physical manifestations of law and order.

The girl, then, whose early environment has taught her the necessity of self-control and self-discipline is ready

THE AMERICAN GIRL

to take her place in the general scheme of the universe. To her the moment of free and independent choice of her own education comes as a period of liberty and not of license. What a glorious sense of growing strength develops in the girl who is constantly learning to understand her environment rather than herself! This she can best achieve by that wonderful sense of joy of life which leads her to take of the best in all that she sees or reads. Let her taste be what it will, in art, literature, or philosophy, she will find in the great minds of the past and present a creative and constructive force that will inspire her to further effort and endeavor along the path of life.

The habit of acquiring knowledge through literature can make or mar an all-around character. The necessity of a distinct literary standard is as essential now as it was in the days before the popular magazine and the Sunday supplement were invented. The girl whose literary horizon is bounded by the

HER EDUCATION

monthly or weekly periodical is indeed but half developed. She must have a standard of thought and a standard of expression to which she constantly returns. Then let her build on this foundation and be as familiar as she can with the latest possible expressions of her own day. Her literary diet should be as well balanced as her physical.

Unless she realizes that it is only by regular and continued development that anything real can be accomplished, she will rush with spasmodic enthusiasm into the mood of the moment, feeling that all that has gone before is of no consequence in the light of her present understanding and belief. If, however, her effort is sincere, she will give her mental and spiritual muscles the same symmetrical development that she accords her physical muscles, and the result will be equally complete in her achievement and in herself.

The horizon of our girl should be clearly and definitely outlined by her-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

self in early life. The root of American life exists in a very shallow soil. From the days of the pioneers our heroes have been those who were most ready to turn their backs on the limitations of their present existence and seek a wider and freer development in some better environment. Now all physical and industrial developments are rapidly changing these conditions. The boy and girl who feel the hampering of a country town and strive to lose themselves in a great metropolis fail to see that, unless they develop within themselves those characteristics that alone can create the very freedom which they seek, their search will be an idle search. What they need most is the strength to mold their own conditions, and the courage to remold the circumstances in which they find themselves, rather than to seek newer problems farther afield.

Breadth of vision is not an outcome of a large population. What can be found more limited, more narrow, than the

HER EDUCATION

various social groups in our large Eastern cities? How little they really know of the inner and intensive development of America! Their strong men are generally manipulators rather than creators; their conspicuous women are either idlers or seekers after artificial responsibilities which the dictates of absentee capitalism have forced upon those who feel the sense of responsibility to the community in which they live.

Side by side with these we find a mass of foreigners congregated in the cities, a population that has brought with it much of the idealism and love of beauty of other lands, but a population that needs help to understand the responsibilities of American freedom.

What do we do for these "strangers within our gates"? We receive them indiscriminately, and exploit them equally indiscriminately. We take those that are fitted and those that are unfitted and say to each: "Yes, we will pay you for your work, pay you so that by self-denial you

THE AMERICAN GIRL

can send money to those you have left at home; but meanwhile we allow you to herd like ants in our tenements, where your children may work their little fingers to the bone; your leaders may teach a doctrine of bloodshed and anarchy learned in a country where for generations the workingman has been oppressed. You may learn English in our night schools, and your children must attend our day schools, but the standards and ideals of American citizenship you must find when and where you can; during which time you will be exploited by the flotsam and jetsam of your own people."

These are the conditions of the great cities; in the towns and smaller industrial and agricultural centers there exists a finer American development of man and woman alike.

The girl with a broad outlook, whether she lives in a small town or a great city, soon realizes that her work lies at her hand; that the theories of coeducation and copartnership rest on many of the

HER EDUCATION

same principles; that equality of the sexes means in no sense similarity. Co-education teaches coresponsibility. The girl in the small Western community must bear her part in the day's burden just as much now as she did in the old days before the work was taken from the home to the factory. Atmosphere, intellectual and physical, is the woman's inherited gift; it is she who creates the home. The girl grows up easily into the thought that each son and daughter of the house must do his or her share toward the general whole. This sense quickly develops into the group feeling.

Let each community, inspired by its girls, plan its own social group life. The "Social Center," much heard of in our cities, is needed even more in the small communities. The girl who understands this will act according to her understanding. We will have some form of collective bargaining in all our industries, and co-operative recreation in our amusements.

II

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

THE average American girl does not really come into her own until she reaches the stage when the present ceases to be a desire for the possession of some coveted object, and the future ceases to be a vague dream of accomplishment without effort. With her maturity comes the growing sense of the enormous value of the immediate present and the conscious discarding of that rule of life which never does to-day what can be put off until to-morrow, and which, until now, has governed her every action. Her amusements and pleasures have been of paramount importance, her duties in school and at home have been accom-

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

plished in the quickest possible time in order to give her more freedom for play. A duty has meant a task, a dreary thing at best, something based on the policy of the twelve Miss Pelicoes of the nursery rhyme.

Suddenly comes the awakening, the consciousness that no day is long enough to accomplish what should be done here and now. A splendid enthusiasm is kindled into being, a desire for achievement, the first conscious longing for creation; it may meet the little girl who is making her doll's trousseau, or it may meet the girl who sees her fifth-edition novel on the shelves of the future. The spirit is the same—the spirit of joy in work. With the vivid appreciation of the newer and greater possibilities in work than in play all sense of drudgery disappears. Manual and mental consciousness grow side by side.

This desire to see something develop into immediate existence brings with it, however, an intolerance of the wasted

THE AMERICAN GIRL

hours of the past. This is the first dawning of that divine discontent which must be cherished and held sacred through all of life. The girl who sees clearly and judges well in these, her first moments of analysis and deeper thought, will see that her scale of measurement must become more and more elastic. The moment of discouragement and discontent with the past must be faced with a true courage which quickly leads to a present determination for other and better things. No results need be final; there is always room for a higher and better development. The ultimate goal is always beyond the reach of human attainment, but each victory on the way becomes another mile-stone along the road we would go. These are battles in the campaign of life, and they come fast and furiously in the early period of a girl's development. Character must be built stone by stone, but, like any building, where we erect a beautiful superstructure on a weak foundation the result is

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

inevitable, even in a country free from earthquakes. These foundation-stones of character must, however, be placed more by habit than by thought; constant introspection and self-study are more apt to create character in the other members of the family than in the girl who is always acting as her own laboratory for purposes of study. It is the objective value we are seeking here rather than the subjective.

Our ideal American girl is more ashamed of her sins of omission than her sins of commission. Through all her being is that splendid sense of activity that leads her to act, often unwisely, but still to act. Where inertia or thoughtlessness holds her back the precious moment is often lost. Too late comes the realization of what her woman instinct and understanding might have meant in that lost opportunity.

Here we come back again to the habit of sustained effort acquired in our girl's early education. She who is working for

THE AMERICAN GIRL

economic, intellectual, or artistic independence can only achieve results if she has also acquired the habit of steady and thorough work. Just as the athlete measures himself up against physical difficulties, so must our young worker wrestle with the moral and intellectual difficulties in her path. Step by step she must meet and overcome each in turn, till she reaches at last the open plain of vision where her instinctive action is based on a sure judgment and a true appreciation of the ideal.

Once having established the doctrine of thoroughness, the value of hard, honest work becomes apparent. Never mind the nature of the work itself, let it be housework or music, the factory or sculpture, the girl's responsibility lies in her own individual relation to it, to her home, and to the community as a whole.

Here she must first learn really to understand the inner meaning of the triangle, that wonderful, mystical spirit of three that governs and inspires all

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

human life and reaches its final development in the spiritual doctrine of the Trinity. We find this in life; we find it in nature; and we find it in art—the perfect proportion necessary for a perfect whole. How incomplete is the home where no children exist to cement the past closely to the future generations! What do we care for the plant that, no matter how brilliant its foliage may be, bears no blossom on its stem? Even the elements of earth, air, and water in which we live, move, and have our being, and which have been divided and subdivided by science, still exist in their three great divisions. Go where we will, look where we will, in every age, the message of all development must come in threes. The French *fleur-de-lis*, symbol of the monarchy, gave place to the *Tiers Etat*; the American judiciary must be equally balanced by the legislative and executive branches of all government, or threatening storm-clouds gather quickly on the political horizon.

THE AMERICAN GIRL

Our girl must look upon herself as a link in the chain of life. Receiving her gift from her parents, she must forge it and beautify it in every way in her power, but only to hold it in readiness for the child that she will bear. Her power is the power of creation, but she must learn to receive before she can freely give. The young artist whose soul is quickened into life by the spirit within her must first learn the technicalities and intricacies of her art from some master before she can give it out to the world. She must be clear of understanding before she can become forceful of expression; she must develop an individuality before she strives for a freedom in which it may be expressed.

The eighteenth century brought to the world a deeper and better understanding of the rights of man; the nineteenth century has carried the message on; but it remains for the twentieth century to develop a new interpretation of the duties rather than the rights of

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

woman. It is often said that the woman must go to the factory to find the work which has been taken from the home. The smoke-house and the spinning-wheel have indeed grown into the fireless cooker and the mill of a thousand looms, but the girl's own relation toward her home does not need to change because the field of her operation changes. She must feel that the home is the unit of life, the object for which all science becomes worth while; that, far from a limit or a hindrance to her development, it is the center from which all effort springs and to which each new interest and higher ideals must be brought in turn. This result can be accomplished with real co-operation only when every member of a family does his or her share toward the material, physical, and spiritual comfort of the common unit. Domestic science will then cease to be a drudgery but become an art to beautify and adorn that which we love so well.

Side by side with this material care

THE AMERICAN GIRL

of the home, the girl, with her keen intuitions and quick perceptions, will bring the best of that which she has gathered intellectually during the day's companionship. She must be sure of having an open-minded and interested hearing for her own thoughts and ideas, so that they in turn may deepen and develop through the general family conception of the underlying principles and ideas of modern life. Those of us that have touched such a home as this, even on the outside of the circle, know what it can mean in any community. But, alas! it is a rare jewel as yet, and must more often be looked at as an ideal than as a realization. We find, on the contrary, a thousand cases where the home is closed down as a fortified citadel against any new thought or new interpretation. This condition will bring its own punishment, for the normally developed girl will respond to the better thought of the day and will insist on being in touch with its tangible form.

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

She will, therefore, seek elsewhere, and often unwisely, that which she demands, and the result is more than often disastrous.

When the unit of the family is well organized and well established our girl's responsibility to the community falls quickly into line. If the century has brought the suffrage to her she must remember that it, too, has come as a duty, not as a right; that with the greater freedom of woman has come a very much more clearly defined public obligation.

Many anti-suffragists say that the vote can only go with the power to bear arms, and yet one of the first official calls issued by the French Government after the order for mobilization of the troops was a magnificent call to the women and children of the country nobly to take the place of their fathers and husbands out in the fields; to strive with all the power they had to husband the crops and plant again, so that next year, when

THE AMERICAN GIRL

the terrible holocaust was over, the wonderful richness of France should come again to its fulfilment.

The response was as instantaneous and as sincere as the response to the call to arms, and everywhere in the poorest districts of the country one saw the tiny children staggering under their heavy loads of corn and grain, for with glad and patriotic hearts they had sent their mules and horses to the front, and had only their own backs to shoulder the load as they worked in the fields and vineyards.

Just as her public duty is clearly defined in time of war, our girl can have no misconception of her public responsibilities in time of peace. At her door lie the thousand and one questions of municipal housekeeping. The clean town and the well-directed schoolhouse are hers to create, and still more hers to sustain; then there are the hospital and the asylum, the prison and reformatory. If every girl in the length and breadth of

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

the land could thoroughly prepare herself with an intelligent and sympathetic knowledge of how these public services should be run, the next generation would give us fewer derelicts to protect.

A woman's appeal is supposed—it is said with scorn—to be an emotional appeal. Let us accept the fact and glory in it. Let us train our girl's quick instincts and emotional reaction to be the biggest and best force in the community. As a motive power it is unsurpassed; its idealism, when used properly, can conquer any difficulty; its strength of purpose knows no defeat.

It has, however, its one great danger, which is at the same time a national curse. Again and again our people face a crisis with magnificent courage and high ideals, only to let the burden slide completely off their shoulders once they have passed the firing-line and long before they have left the danger zone. The steady and sustained watchfulness that our ancestors brought with them

THE AMERICAN GIRL

across the water, and that served them in such stead in the early days of pioneer life, has indeed been forgotten in these later years. Time after time we come face to face with periods of miserable reaction after a splendid political renaissance.

Our reformers are so apt to be over-zealous and over-confident in their own individual judgments that no group is able to hold together with any real cohesive power, and their thoroughly venal opponents only have to abide their time to win a humiliating victory from those who realize too late the weakness of their cause.

Our girls should bring a true sense of loyalty and a more sustained support into the political arena than they are as yet promising to do. Their interest will always be one of feeling rather than one of judgment, but they should learn to use this as a quality and not as a fault. To accomplish what the twentieth century should produce in womanhood we

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

must cultivate every side of group activity that is possible under present social and industrial conditions. That modern trade-unionism is developing into a mistaken attitude of class war and class consciousness, in no sense does away with the fundamental truths inherent in the principles of collective bargaining and organized effort.

Our feminine gift to the cause must be an active support of principles, not of individuals, who may be right or wrong. We must learn to stand shoulder to shoulder and seek the best and most clear-sighted leaders, whose standard we know we can follow through to the end. This matter of choice of leadership is not a question of class or of age, it is merely recognition of a breadth of vision, a singleness of purpose, and a deeply inspired human sympathy which will cause a trained intelligence to act with unerring judgment. We must count on our girls of the next generation to help us outlive Theodore Roosevelt's well-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

deserved reproach that this country erects a triumphal arch in order to use the stones as brickbats to hurl after the hero who has just passed through to the beating of drums. All this sense of group responsibility must rest on the highest sense of individual responsibility as a unit of endeavor. The individualism that has run riot during the last decade is neither co-operative nor creative. It is a form of egotism pure and simple that causes the modern girl to break down all standards of taste or consideration in her treatment of her own contemporaries or her manners toward older people. Manners are really nothing less than a sympathetic understanding of other people's point of view.

The girl of the future will have too fine a self-respect to fail to recognize the rights of others. The newer and better liberty which has come to her will give her a deeper appreciation of the eternal feminine within her soul; she will learn to use and not to waste the love of the

HER RESPONSIBILITIES

beautiful, the eternal desire to please. Her dress, her language, her accomplishments will fall into their natural positions, forming the attributes of a rounded and developed personality. But above all and beyond all will be within her the woman, with a standard and an ultimate ideal, the woman who bears within herself the life of the generations yet unborn.

III

HER RECREATION

TO secure for our young people throughout the country a recreation which shall be essentially *re-creational* in character is one of the problems of the twentieth century. From north to south and from east to west the playground associations and the various groups that are seeking to socialize the "little red schoolhouse" are all accomplishing great things.

Back of their particular field, however, a great motive power is slowly coming into being, a deep sense of mutual co-operation among our girls, and a clear understanding of one another's needs. This power is capable of developing the

HER RECREATION

limited, class-conscious or group-conscious girl into the socially conscious woman whose horizon shall be as broad as mankind, and whose activities shall be directed by an understanding judgment and inspired by a vision of the ultimate ideal. Surely, then, our present problem is to help develop this power with every means at hand. Our girl in the great city is learning to understand the girl of the little town. Our girl whose responsibilities are great because of a sheltered youth and great opportunities now meets the girl whose life has already been one long struggle against conditions, and together they are able to find a common meeting-ground and a common understanding, where each is able to give and each to receive, and where they discuss the points of agreement first rather than the points of divergence.

Here, then, is where our recreational forces must come into line. It is through the development of games that the child has learned what team-play really means;

THE AMERICAN GIRL

it is with a song on his lips and joy in his heart that he stands beside his playmate to defeat the opposing team. Our girl must have that same sense of joy and order that comes in the organized play of youth, the same splendid forgetfulness of the task that is over for the moment, the intense absorption in the game of the present, whatever it may be. The joy of life is the most precious gift that one human being can bring to another—it is but the spirit of youth that fills the city girl with joy and gladness when, after days of dreary work and drudgery, she turns her face to the peace and beauty of the country and feels surging within her the joy of the eternal hills, the winding streams, and every wind that blows across the sea and wood.

This love of life, this search of like for like that Wagner gives us in his *leit-motif* expressing the youth of Siegfried, must be a dominating note in true recreation. Its very essence, however, necessitates companionship; the soul will

HER RECREATION

face its darkest hours alone, but when the river of doubt and sorrow is passed and life's journey leads again through flower-sown fields of joy and gladness it will turn to human sympathy and understanding for perfect fulfilment. This human companionship once established, the recreational instinct will seek its individual expression.

Modern scientists tell us that the best way to rest the overworked brain cells is by an intense concentration along a different line of mental activity. Some of them carry this thought so far that they look forward to the time when sleep can be reduced to a minimum, the few moments of actual loss of consciousness. The rest now secured through the hours spent in sleep will then be secured by each set of brain cells in turn, while the others are working with absolute concentration. Just as our brain needs change for recreation, so are our muscles capable of relieving one another. The man or woman whose daily task necessitates a

THE AMERICAN GIRL

constant physical strain of hand or foot will find the greatest relief in exercising another set of muscles which have been idle during the day's work. The physical trainer will insist upon an intelligent development of the whole body to secure the desired efficiency at any particular exercise.

To be complete, then, our recreation must be organized and ordered; it must be in groups, which yet allow for the individual task and individual needs; it must appeal to heart and brain; it must stimulate each in turn, in order to secure a broader vision and a deeper understanding of the inner beauty of life. The girl who goes from the country to the city for her inspiration and her recreation learns better to understand the wonderful things that man has produced throughout the centuries; the city girl, finding herself in the intense stillness of the country, utterly aloof from the flotsam and jetsam of her daily environment, is able for the first time to look within her own

HER RECREATION

soul and to seek to understand the inner meaning of life itself.

Each in turn returns to her own life with a clearer understanding of each other's point of view. It is this same imagination which most needs cultivation in the American girl of to-day. To secure a complete understanding and sympathy she must be able to project her inner life outside of her own environment. The girl who stands at the loom for ten hours a day and seeks her recreation by dancing the better part of the night, and the girl whose idea of heavy occupation is a culture class or a discussion club, both need to develop their imaginations to see and understand a better and a higher ideal of life. The girl who stands behind the counter all day has but little energy or initiative to find out for herself the beauties of the parks and museums of our great cities. Take her to them once, however, and she soon discovers a wonderful door opening out into unknown worlds of beauty and interest.

THE AMERICAN GIRL

This desire to meet the recreational needs of self-supporting women and girls is one of the objects of a national organization known as the National Vacation Committee, now one of the branches of the Woman's Department of the National Civic Federation.

This committee started as a local city organization, but soon joined the national group, as its work grew and developed. Its original object was to investigate and publish lists of country boarding-houses where city girls could find for a time the absolutely necessary rest and freedom from the stress and strain of their every-day work and life. Out of this grew the necessity of organizing a savings fund whereby small sums could be saved and deposited readily throughout the year, the total to be used by each girl when the time came for her essential vacation. Employers' interest and active co-operation were secured; large numbers of them have grown to realize that no woman can work as well for fifty-two

HER RECREATION

weeks of the year as she can for fifty, that economically it is a better thing to further the taking of vacations by all their staff.

Since its beginning the social side of the organization has grown by leaps and bounds. Women and girls of all grades of opinions and beliefs meet together to discuss their common interests and common needs. In one city a large building has been secured where this side of the work is centralized. There are bedrooms for depositors who wish to live in the building, known as the Vacation Headquarters; there are also bath-rooms and club-rooms, a restaurant and sitting-rooms where men and women friends can always be received. All of these are open to any depositor on the payment of a small annual fee.

The aim of the committee is to establish an organization which shall be as fluid as water on the social side, and yet as firm as the rock of Gibraltar in regard to the security of all money deposited with it for safe-keeping.

THE AMERICAN GIRL

The whole organization is essentially democratic in spirit and in ideal. The recognition and development of leadership is its watchword; the work is done by a group of women who stand shoulder to shoulder, but whose principle is to work with one another, rather than for one another.

The growth of the work has been so rapid that as yet its power of endurance has not been fully tested. In three years branches have been established in eight cities, twenty-five thousand women have become depositors, and two hundred thousand dollars has been deposited. In its past this organization has more than justified its existence; its future, however, is capable of development into one of our great educational movements. It must consist of one central organization with which groups of women throughout the country can readily affiliate. Its work will then develop according to the recreational needs of each community; but beyond and above its material field

HER RECREATION

will lie the newer and better interpretation of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." A common meeting-ground and a common ideal will bring women of all faiths and all social horizons under the same banner, and our future mothers will have a truer understanding to give to the generations yet unborn.

Other larger educational and cultural organizations already exist among American women and girls. The Federation of Women's Clubs touches the lives of more than a million women. The various religious and historical societies have branches in every state. Each has its own particular field and its own activities. Each one of the many groups that are furthering a better understanding of women by women is doing good work. There is danger, however, of allowing the organization itself to become the end, rather than the means. Where the individual interest is of greater importance than the spirit, true democracy is impossible and ultimate failure inevitable. Class

THE AMERICAN GIRL

barriers and group distinctions are as dangerous in trades-unions as in college clubs.

What women throughout the country still need is a freer association with other women whose standards, social, intellectual and moral, are higher than their own. As a people we are too inclined to seek a lower standard for our recreation, to level down. We seek a companionship where no intellectual effort is necessary; we choose a theater where the entertainment furnished is a popular musical comedy, rather than a play with literary merit, interpreted by talented actors. Many a popular magazine secures a large circulation by fiction which is utterly valueless in quality; other publications containing literary and historical articles written by serious authors reach but a few homes. In our recreation, as in our work, we want immediate results with a minimum of effort; to be entertained generally means to be relaxed. The splendid rest and refreshment that come with a great, but different, in-

HER RECREATION

tellectual or physical effort are known only to the few. The ideal life would be for the daily existence to be so ordered that no definite holiday time would be necessary—each twenty-four hours would bring its own period of work, play, and rest. In our complicated civilization, however, this is well-nigh impossible. Elbert Hubbard tells us that the only person who really needs a vacation is the man who has just returned from one. From one point of view this is essentially true. Who has not lived over again and again in later life the dreary Monday-morning atmosphere of our early school days, who has not felt the harness fret and chafe when reassumed after a period of freedom? These are the passing hours that come to all; back of them, however, lies the force that may become their cure—the inner joy in the work itself, the intense satisfaction in the definite accomplishment.

This is the joy that is strengthened and developed by the true vacation.

THE AMERICAN GIRL

What becomes irksome in work is the purely mechanical, the constantly repeated motion of hand or brain. This must be met by a complete change of occupation and environment, or our human machine becomes as antiquated as a seven-year-old battle-ship. Molecular action in a metal determines its period of usefulness, entirely apart from the strain to which it may be subjected. How much more must the life in our human machine be considered and safeguarded from every side! The girl whose imagination is strengthened and stimulated to learn, to understand, the history and habits of the people who have created in foreign lands the goods she is selling across the counter, is the girl who will not only become a more intelligent human being, but a better saleswoman. The girl whose leisure hours are spent among the precious works of art that the ages have provided will be less interested in spending her hard-earned salary in vying with her com-

HER RECREATION

panions to dress in the most extreme and the most inappropriate of the season's fashions.

The girl whose taste has led her to seek for companionship the best writers and musicians of the past will create in her own environment and every-day life an opportunity for satisfying her hunger. Surely, then, this is all education, just as all life is education. From the first moment of self-consciousness to the end we are constantly seeking the ultimate goal of our desires, whatever they may be. The old age which is at once a benediction and an inspiration to any community is that of the man or woman who reaches the fullness of years with a keen sympathy and a deep understanding of the problems of youth. The great courage is hers who is willing to stand aside and let others fight the great fight with the weapons she has had to lay aside. The greater faith is hers who with the clear-eyed and experienced judgment of years sees through the ar-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

rogant mistakes of youth to the achievement which the future will create.

Our present generation must feel this with all their being in order to prepare now for the period of terrible upheaval and suffering which is close at hand. The appalling tragedy of 1914 in Europe has never been equaled in the history of the world. Every country on the globe will have to bear a part of the reflex action of the forces that are face to face in the struggle of civilization against an arrogant barbarian that knows no equal. The women who have seen their homes destroyed and their children murdered before their eyes have a right to demand before God and man an international support of their sorrow and suffering. The thousands of young lives offered up on the battle-field must know that their sacrifice and that of their nearest and dearest have not been in vain. The women and children who have been called to give of their all must have the active sympathy and help of the indi-

HER RECREATION

viduals of those countries whose governments have kept aloof from the general holocaust. No human being can be free from a personal responsibility. Side by side we must work for our sisters across the sea. Filled with the deepest human sympathy, we must give of that which is divine within us, the love which is ready for all sacrifice, even unto life itself. The creative period of reconstruction when the bloodshed is over can then be ours to help and ours to serve. With a constant political and military menace removed from the world, the future governments of Europe will give of their best to the internal development of their countries and their peoples. A newer and more ideal patriotism will come into being; the same unifying forces that have banished all differing political parties before a national danger and a national menace will find the same constructive expression in time of peace. The destructive, anarchistic spirit of the early century will be replaced by a spir-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

itual renaissance; a clearer idealism will triumph over materialism. Thus, in the end, will come different peoples whose mutual relationship shall be one of infinite understanding, but whose patriotism will in each case remain a dominating force.

IV

THE GIRL AND HER FUTURE

THE problem now facing the American girl is her utter inability to realize that her future can only be a logical development of her present. Her mental attitude pictures the distant years as a flowery period when the man of her destiny shall place at her feet the fruits of his toil, so that together they may wander hand in hand through the sunny paths of life.

The girl who was led by circumstances to work for a daily wage at fourteen will openly express her scorn of the girl whose marriage has meant a partnership in work as well as in play. The girl behind the counter and the girl at

THE AMERICAN GIRL

the desk will say with one voice, "We work only until we marry." What matters it to them that at their sides are working a hundred gray-haired women whose entire lives are witness to the fallacy of this doctrine—women the tragedy of whose existence has been a life of dreary work and mechanical drudgery, while the months and years have passed in waiting for the realization of a dream; or women who, having thought to choose the shortest road to happiness, have found their homes built on such treacherous quicksands that the storms of life have quickly thrown them back into the deep waters of our modern industrial system?

What are our educators doing to help us solve this problem? In the year ending July 31, 1914, over thirty-five thousand children left the New York City schools to enter some form of gainful occupation. What equipment are the girls taking with them, what standards have they acquired to help them

HER FUTURE

face the future and its problems? Go to employer after employer, and the answer is always the same—"The average girl who comes to us for a position is totally uneducated, her years of school life have failed to teach her the mere rudiments of a business career"; the primary tools of reading, writing, and arithmetic have been placed in her hands with such blunted edges that they are of little value, and the basic qualities of accuracy, concentration, thoroughness, and ambition are conspicuous by their absence.

Society must shoulder the responsibility for this disastrous state of affairs; it is society that has for years allowed our public-school system to deliberately shut its eyes to the needs of this community. It is society that has fostered the preparation of a curriculum covering twelve years of schooling, when a large percentage of the children leave grammar-schools before they have passed the eighth grade.

THE AMERICAN GIRL

The knowledge that a child of fifteen can acquire before leaving school is but small, whereas the mental and moral habits which she can acquire will control her entire future, thus giving her a rounded and well-balanced conception of life, so that she may discover for herself all the facts she needs.

Why is so much of the time spent in scientific management of the industry given to the machine, and so little to the scientific development of the individual who is to run the machine?

The modern employer of men is solving the problem with success, and in many instances with a clear-sighted vision that unfortunately the eastern atmosphere somewhat clouds; he has succeeded in welding his human machinery into a compact mass, working for the good of the whole. The office-boy is a potential manager, and has been engaged as such. In time his best brains will be used not in dominating and controlling the industry, but in de-

HER FUTURE

veloping each individual in it to the utmost of his capacity.

This is the ideal; and the method of the various corporation schools is often efficient in the extreme. Travel where you will through the Middle West and you will find a group of young managers who have worked their way up and received their education in the industry itself. A young English banker traveling through this country a few years ago, in the interest of some of his American securities, was deeply impressed by the presidents of the various companies forming one of our great corporations. He found them men in the prime of life, in many cases barely forty, with an entirely new ideal of democracy in their factories.

Whereas a few years ago the management of an industry represented capital alone, thus driving labor into an antagonistic group armed for a campaign of defense and offense, the modern management realizes that labor and a co-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

operative group of employees is the very corner-stone of industrial existence.

Under these conditions workman and manager are striving shoulder to shoulder for the same end; the incentive is found in the weekly pay-roll and in the future success of their joint work, thus bringing about an additional financial return as well as a larger opportunity for development of the individual.

This presupposes organized labor, with a knowledge of the industry as a whole, way beyond the various individual and highly specialized processes. Such knowledge as this can only be acquired through continuity of service, broader education, and a highly stimulated ambition inspired by the vocational ideal.

These ideas have been accepted by the employers of men; but, alas! when the office-boy is replaced by an errand-girl the same process has rarely been followed. The responsibility for this failure must be equally divided between the employer and the girl. The former

HER FUTURE

has failed utterly to understand the material with which he is working, but the latter has an entirely false conception of her own relation toward life and work.

Because of the fact that modern conditions have taken the work from the home to the factory, at present over eight million American women have entered the industrial world. These conditions can no more be changed than we can forget the discovery of the steam-engine, and go back to the older civilization when the woman could spin and weave by her own fireside the rough materials which were to be worn by her husband as he worked at the forge and in the fields or went out to slay his enemy with his own hand.

Conditions have improved during these years, but civilization has brought to the woman this false conception of her own value in the world. She has grown to believe that a woman's duty is not to work, but simply to exist until such time as she can find some one who will

THE AMERICAN GIRL

work for her and support her parasitic existence. The harder her struggle the more she considers marriage as an ultimate goal, where she can rest from her labors. The girl who is economically independent is playing with life, drinking deep at the fountain of every passing emotion, and is always waiting for the overmastering one which will sweep her off her feet. There is little or no preparation for life as a career, no training for an all-around and well-developed character, when the day's work, whatever it may be, shall be as much of a matter of course as the fact of existence itself. Home-making as a vocation is never planned for in any woman's college—we may find excellent classes in home economics and scientific dietetics that no husband would indorse, but never a profound course of study based on the differences between the feminine and the masculine minds and character, rather than their equality.

If this is the training of a so-called

HER FUTURE

privileged class, how much more is it the case with the child who is working for a living from the time she is fourteen years of age! First as a bundle wrapper, then a stock-girl, and finally a salesgirl in a large department store, what is her attitude toward her work? During her years of service she has rarely looked forward beyond the next pay-day; never for a moment has she planned to develop her capacity for seizing any opportunity for advancement that may occur. Her belief is that of the fatalist—to her everything is based on the doctrine of luck. Nothing is in sequence, there is no vision of a possible future for which she must prepare, whatever position she is now filling. The immediate and utterly inadequate salary is the only incentive she recognizes. Based on her own experience, her initiative is killed by fear, the ever-present dread of losing her job. Her conviction is that she is of no value to her employer; her years of service have taught her nothing

THE AMERICAN GIRL

that a new girl cannot learn in a few days, consequently it is better to repeat over and over the same task, never to think, never to reproach herself with the sin of commission. This is the average girl as she is found by the average employer. He takes her as he finds her and does practically nothing for her. In the vital question of health and hygiene he is criminally negligent. Instead of recognizing that as his future depends upon the condition of his human equipment he must make an intensive study of each girl and her physical needs, he is satisfied with a perfunctory medical adviser who only treats the cases that may come to him among the employees, or a trained nurse who has far too heavy a burden in treating the emergency cases as they may develop. As a result of this system one of the large department stores in New York recently discovered that out of one hundred girls examined ninety-three had crooked backs. These were still at the stage when they could re-

HER FUTURE

spond to treatment, but a little more delay, a little more so-called "welfare work," and the harm would have been irreparable.

The ultimate consumer is the sufferer; the industrial sickness is grievous, but the best doctor is the employer if he is only willing to see and act on the knowledge as it comes to him at last. If he would start when the girl starts, but travel a different road; if he would accept the fact that every woman's real vocation is marriage whether or no the fates decree that she is to attain the goal of her desire—he would then realize the fact that the better the future wife, the better the salesgirl he can have in the meanwhile.

A really intelligent system of education in the department store would bring a very different salesgirl into being. Salesmanship schools and continuation classes exist in many directions, but the vocational idea is absent from them all. No girl is trained to think along the lines of

THE AMERICAN GIRL

partnership with her employer—the buyer is placed in complete control of his department and he rules as a king. An organization where every idea is inspired from above will never live for longer than the life of the dictator.

Bring your girl, your buyer, and your employment manager into the closest contact, let each represent his or her own group working with mutual confidence toward a common aim, and the old-time merchant spirit will be found again in the girl behind the counter.

Give her an incentive, give her the chance, by training, of earning better wages, and the result will be immediate. Cultivate her qualities and study where and how to place them. Give her an understanding of the problem as a whole, as well as the notion-counter in particular; give her a knowledge of human nature; train her to deal with the normal and the abnormal, as she meets it across the counter—and the business of the department store will develop out of its

HER FUTURE

present bounds before our little sales-girl finds her mate in the outside world. Meanwhile she is happy and developing freely, so that when the time comes for the care and responsibility of home life she will be looking for newer and better opportunities of work both within the home and outside it, and the next generation will be the better for her life and work in the store.

The department-store problem does not differ from other forms of employment in its basic principles. Only a few men employing a large number of women organize any system of advancement where each girl in turn is given an opportunity of fitting herself for a more responsible position. The question of advancement is apt to be a matter where individual facility is a liability rather than an asset, for the head of a department demands immediate results, and as both he and the girl consider the employment merely temporary, he will keep her where she is rather than put her in an-

THE AMERICAN GIRL

other position where she may or may not succeed.

On the other hand, the girl will always wait until the opportunity comes to her, instead of going out to meet it on the highway of life. We hear of equal pay for equal work, but we know that the work is *not* equal. A boy works now to create his foundation and knows that ten years from now he will still be working on the superstructure. The girl works now, but her ambitions for the future are built on a foundation which exists in her imagination only, her present occupation bearing no relation to it. If once our American girl will realize that the future is hers to make, not to receive, the battle will be won. She will then be ready to develop the best that is in her for the sake of the generations yet unborn. All her gifts and her infinite possibilities will be brought into being. With a high-souled courage born of knowledge, and a clearer vision, she will face the new difficulties as they cross her path.

HER FUTURE

This, then, is the problem of the future: To create a system of commercial and industrial training which shall first change the girl's attitude to her own life, and then to the occupation in which she is engaged.

This is fundamental, and it can only be accomplished by the real builder of this generation, who has learned that "men, not materials, are the finished product of a factory." This man has progressed a thousand miles beyond the social worker or reformer whose profession is to discover faults in the past, but never to create a sound and humane business in the future. This is inevitable, for, were the social worker creative and constructive, he would be already on the pay-roll of one of our modern corporations. As it is, he has become a clock-setter for Father Time and, much to his surprise, finds that the sun is moving far more quickly than the works of his antiquated clock.

The modern employer will also leave

THE AMERICAN GIRL

on one side the destructive labor-agitator who only seeks to destroy, openly stating that universal warfare must be the immediate future for the industrial world. This man is a danger to the entire community—he is blessed with the gift of tongues and with his fiery eloquence can set aflame the world in which he moves. The spirit of martyrdom pervades his followers; the light they see and are ready to sacrifice all to attain is so dazzling that it blinds them to the real source from which it springs—a materialization greater than any the world has ever seen.

The modern employer having failed to find the solution of his problem outside has sought for it within. Inspired by the best of our educators wherever they are found, on editorial staff or college faculty, he has turned to his own employees and together they have worked at the problem with a common ideal and a common knowledge. The result we can see exhibited on every hand—

HER FUTURE

not only a moral, but a financial success.

It is this latter fact that will drive out of existence the old-time factory with its hazardous machines, its badly lighted and badly ventilated building, and its miserable pay-roll producing an under-nourished working force incapable of any physical or mental development. Such factories as these in the old days worked two twelve-hour shifts for seven days of the week, and then claimed that the industry demanded it. Now they are being forced out of business by the employer with three shifts, who enormously decreases his unit cost by increasing his output.

We have reached the day when the community can no longer afford an industry that cannot pay a living wage. No more children shall be born in a mill town where only a few male spinners can earn enough to support wife and child.

The public, our great democracy, has registered a protest that has been heard

THE AMERICAN GIRL

through the length and breadth of the land. Our boys and girls of the future will work as they have been created to work—with fearlessness, honesty of purpose, courage and determination, and with trained intelligence and moral integrity, ready to cope with life's problems as they present themselves. Thus will our twentieth century produce an adolescence which will glory in its gift of life, its power to work, and its strength to serve.

THE END

